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Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

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~ Mywife Worm Due Today! ~ People Are Talking! ~ New PayPal Fees!
~ MySpace.com Probed! ~ Chicago Pirates Busted ~ IE 7 Now Available!

~ Tiffany Is Suing eBay! ~ New MS Blog Policies! ~ Worm Name Confusion!
~ Measure Tech Literacy! ~ Online Gaming Consoles ~ Ninety-Nine Nights!

-* Vista Emphasizes Security! *-
-* ICANN Places Limits On Price Hikes! *-
-* Web Companies Accused of Bowing to China! *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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Well, that damn groundhog allegedly saw his shadow, which portends to mean that we're in for six more weeks of winter. Fortunately, we all know about urban legends, and their lack of veracity! And, if the next six weeks of winter weather turns out to be like the past six weeks, I can live with it. It's been a relatively warm and not-so-wintry season so far. Still, this is the time of year in which I start to pine for warm and sunny days of spring. Here in New england, we refer to it as cabin fever!

Over the years, I occasionally mention how hectic life usually is; and for me, it's usually pertaining to work. Well, that doesn't seem to change much over the years. Work just doesn't seem to get back to a "normal" hectic routine. I've never seen so many stressed out people; and I quite often see myself feeling the same. Maybe I'm due for a change, or maybe even retirement. Maybe it's the time of year, and winter blahs. Too much pressure placed on people to push for success in the name of doing their job, and making everyone else successful! No wonder so many businesses grow too fast and fold just as quickly. Anyone want to chip in for a winning Powerball ticket!? <grin>

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I've got to tell ya... there's a real scarcity of posts in the comp.sys.atari.st newsgroup this week. That's happening more and more often these days, and I guess it's to be expected. Atari hasn't made a computer in many, many moons, and all of the more casual users have long since moved on, leaving the hard-core users who know their machines inside and out. And people who know their machines inside and out seldom need to ask for help on the UseNet. Well, there are always the newbies that score a 1040 on eBay or find their old Mega in the back of the closet and realize that they've forgotten

whatever they might have known at one time, but they're the exception rather than the rule.

I've recently taken what little spare time circumstances have left me with and spent it on an interesting (to me, anyway) project... putting my operating system of choice (currently Linux) on a USB 'pen drive' and running things from there. "Live CDs" have been around for a while now, and they've come a long way from where they were the first time I checked them out. The problem with Live CDs is two-fold. First, CD drives are relatively slow. Second, you can only write to them once, so you can't change things on-the-fly as you would with a hard drive. Sure, you can write to the hard drive if you want to, but if the object of this little exercise is to run from an 'alternate' drive, that that's kind of like cheating, isn't it?

Then, someone came up with the brilliant idea of running from a USB pen drive. They're faster than CD, and you can both read and write to them. And, since the USB drive is incredibly portable, you can pop it into your pocket and carry everything that 'is' your computer with you and run it on any PC you come across (as long as it knows how to boot from a USB device).

One night, while I couldn't sleep, my mind started to wander. 'What might be the next step in this little game', I asked myself.

Then it hit me... my spiffy new digital camera attaches to the computer via USB. The memory stick in the camera will hold a gigabyte of data. Hmmm... this could be interesting.

Installing the OS on the memory stick turned out to be incredibly easy. Whoever built the setup I decided to try out (a version of Slackware called SLAX) did an amazing job.

The problem, it seemed, was getting the computer to look at the camera as a bootable device. Many tries on many computers convinced me that it just wouldn't work.

My next revelation came when I saw an ad for a USB card reader. I wondered... could it be that easy? It turns out that it was. Once the reader was attached to the computer, and the memory stick inserted into the card reader, the machine booted up from it without a second thought.

So what I've got now is my entire computer system on a piece of plastic about a third the size of a book of matches, and a reader that will fit in the palm of my hand with plenty of room to spare. It's basically everything that 'is' my computer... except for the computer. I've added my favorite graphics manipulation application so that I can work on the photographs I take on just about any computer. Yes, the memory stick still works in the camera, so I can take pictures, pop the memory stick out of the camera and into the card reader, and I'm ready to do whatever I choose to.

A good friend of mine asked me, "WHY would you want to do that?"

My answer, spoken through a toothy smile, was, "Because I can!"

When you get right down to it, could there be any better reason than that?

Okay, enough of my ranting. Let's get to the news, hints, tips and info

from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Olivier Landemarre posts this about ARAnyM:

"Here a new compiled version of Aranym with more optimizations

http://olivier.landemarre.free.fr/aranymexe.zip (2,5Mo)

And if you have not already updated it yesterday there is alway's cygwin1.dll here working with 64bit proc.

http://olivier.landemarre.free.fr/cygwin1.zip (700Ko) "

'Badak' asks about anyone who might be interested in an IDE adaptor:

"It's a question; I am looking for all guys who are interested by IDE hard drive adapter for STE (it will be perhaps internal , but no on the cartridge port and not St, no STF.. sorry)

If we are 100 (minimum), Rodolphe Czuba (CT60 creator) will be ready for looking this project so if you are REALLY REALLY interested (only serious guys please), send your (valid) email address to this email IDEPROJECT@FREE.FR with this message (it's an example)

- Yes, I am really interested by an IDE adapter for my favourite STE

(It's not the project but if you are interested for an IDE adapter for MegaSTE or TT, tell me too)

It's not a preorder !!! , don't ask any info about price, size, etc. it's just for starting the project."

Ronald Hall tells Badak:

"I know I already mentioned myself in the Atariage forums, but I'll repeat it again here. I'd be interested in one for my Mega STe."

Mark Friedman adds:

"I would be interested for my Mega STE as well."

'Alison' tells Badak:

"I think people will be more inclined to formally register interest when there's a nearly finished product as opposed to a project awaiting kick-off.

We've all been through let's-do-this-today so many times and it never comes to anything.

Mark Duckworth gives voice to a couple of the thoughts I had:

"I've thought about this and for me it highly depends on cost. Can you produce the board for $25 or $100? Because it makes a difference on justification. I already have to spend 10bazillion $ on CTPCI, SuperVidel, etc because... well.. I love my falcon, but SCSI drives are dime a dozen these days and I have plenty of scsi goodness on my tt and mega ste's. And this project isn't even for TT or mega ste. Naturally there's the problem where we're probably going to run out of scsi drives that work on these old interfaces but I think we're a ways away from that.

To top it all off, should I really be buying hardware for computers I haven't used enough? (My TT's and Mega STe). I wish electricity was free."

As an interesting sort-of corollary to the little project I mentioned earlier, 'Roderick Hero' asks:

"Does anybody know if there's a way to boot a MSA file stored on the ST HDD directly without writing it onto a floppy?"

Michael Bernstein tells Roderick:

"I am actually writing a (simple) program which allows to read or write such disk images on a Atari. I want also add a MetaDOS driver which should allow to mount such images and access them like any other drives.

I don't want add booting from images because I think, it is not easy. While booting from such an image i need to have access to the HDD. But to have access to the HDD i need the hard disk driver to be present which is normally the case if I have booted from HDD."

Patrice Mandin tells Michael:

"Yeah, should be quite simple to do. And don't forget a program/accessory to change the "mounted" floppy image.

Most autoboot floppies are games and demos, which are likely to take over the system, hence crashing/preventing any further access to any hard disk you could have. So you should be able to run the program in boot sector, but not much more.

With a 68030 or higher processor with a PMMU, it might be possible to create a virtual ST address space, so any hardware access could be redirected softly, but it is something that needs much more work. Well, it would be an ST emulator, using main CPU to run the program instead of an emulated 68000."

Mark Bedingfield comes at it from a slightly different direction:

"What about redirecting the floppy to a ramdisk? I.e. load the file from the hard drive, into memory then warm boot the ST? Obviously won't work without a fair bit of ram, and multi disk games would be a problem too.

Especially considering most of the PP stuff etc, is packed all ready."

Michael replies:

"I have a nice book about drives on Atari ST (Scheibenkleister). This book contains a part about a ram disk which was alive after reset and don't need to boot a driver after reset. And it is possible to boot from this ramdisk. It was the "Luftschloss" from Claus Brod and Anton Stepper.

Maybe it is possible to use this ideas to load the disk image and use it after reset to boot from."

Patrice reasons it out a bit:

"Even for a ramdisk, you'll need a ramdisk driver, that must be kept functioning while the game/demo is running. And there is a big probability it will get overwritten the same way as an hard disk driver.

Only cleanly written software will work with such a setup, or games/demos that have been patched to use OS functions for disk and memory access."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week (if for nothing else, then just to see if I've decided to do something else unusual and of limited usefulness), same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Ninety-Nine Nights In April!
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Online Console Gaming!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Xbox 360's '99 Nights' To Launch in April in Japan

Microsoft Corp. said on Wednesday it will launch "Ninety-Nine Nights," one of the highly anticipated games for its Xbox 360 console, on April 20 in

Japan.

Microsoft is counting on the game to drive sales of Xbox 360s in Japan after sales of consoles in the first month fell short of those in the failed launch of the original Xbox four years ago.

The company has been struggling to gain ground in Japan against local rivals Nintendo Co. Ltd. and Sony Corp., whose PlayStation 2 console is the global best seller.

While Xbox 360 has the advantage of being the only next-generation game console in the market - Sony and Nintendo both plan to launch next-generation game machines this year - Microsoft had sold 112,657 units as of January 29 in Japan, according to a survey by Enterbrain, the publisher of leading Japanese game magazine Famitsu.

"Ninety-Nine Nights" is a big-scale battle game produced by Japanese game designer Tetsuya Mizuguchi’s Q Entertainment in partnership with South Korean developer Phantagram.

Mizuguchi, one of Japan’s top game developers behind titles such as "Lumines" for Sony’s Playstation Portable, was tapped in the hopes of attracting Japanese game fans.

Microsoft said it does not yet have specific plans to launch "Ninety-Nine Nights" outside of Japan.

## Online Console Gaming Primed for Take-off

Online video game playing is growing up. A new generation of game consoles is ushering in online features that promise to make playing with others over the Internet easier and more compelling than sitting on the couch and playing solo or with a friend.

Eyeing a much larger market, console makers are stealing a page or two from the PC gaming playbook.

Hard-core PC game enthusiasts spend a fortune "tricking out" their machines with lightning-fast memory, bleeding-edge video cards and even water-cooling systems to get an edge in multiplayer online games that can take on a life of their own.

By contrast, console games are less interactive than PC gaming cousins and consoles themselves are less easy to modify, which levels the playing field. That is set to change.

Game enthusiasts say Microsoft Corp.’s Xbox Live online game service has gained share with help from its blockbuster game "Halo 2" as well as its new Xbox 360 console. The service offers multiplayer competition and skill-matching, voice and text chat, buddy lists and shopping - all key pillars of online gaming.

Justin Willman, a 26-year-old network administrator from St. Louis, said the walls that separate PC and console online gaming are already crumbling.

"Xbox Live is merging those worlds," Willman said.

PC game makers still have the advantage of using the keyboard and mouse as a controller, which allows them to give gamers more control and options in game play.

But gamers say few, if any, of the community-oriented online PC games are as consumer-friendly as Xbox Live, which has standardized and automated the process of selecting servers and competitors for the best game playing experience.

"Sometimes you just want to hit go and let it do the work for you," said Sid Shuman, 25, an avid PC and console gamer who contributes to GamePro magazine.

The universe of computer role-playing games - which foster virtual online communities where people chat, form elaborate social guilds and trade virtual assets - have taken the entertainment world by storm.

Blizzard Entertainment's "World of Warcraft," has attracted 5.5 million users to shatter previous records. Players not only buy the PC game, they pay a monthly subscription fee of roughly $15 per month - something that appeals to upstart online game service providers looking for ways to turn a profit.

Xbox Live is a central feature in Microsoft's new Xbox 360 console and online strategies are also key for Sony and Nintendo Co. Ltd, which are slated to release new consoles this year.

"This will be the online generation," Shuman said.

Microsoft says its has 2 million Xbox Live users in 24 countries. Its silver membership is free to Xbox 360 owners and the $50-per-year gold membership is required to access multiplayer features.

Sony Corp. has 180 online-enabled games for its current PlayStation 2 and 2.7 million registered users in its North America online console gaming community. Xbox Live is considered by many gamers as the preferred service, but analysts say Sony, the world's No. 1 console seller, will give Microsoft a run for its money with its upcoming PlayStation 3.

David Cole, president of DFC Intelligence, a video game market research firm, estimates that less than 5 percent of console owners now connect for online play on a regular basis. He said that number could hit 10 percent in the next two years as next-generation units debut.

Today's average gamer has grown up with PC, console and mobile games as well as online shopping and chat. They are demanding that video game companies give them the best of all worlds on all of their devices.

"Consumers are not bashful," said Chip Lange, vice president of marketing for the online unit at Electronic Arts Inc., the world's biggest video game publisher, which is investing in online gaming for future growth.

"The difference between online and offline play will disappear," predicted Chris Donahue, director of Windows graphics and gaming technologies at Microsoft.

In addition to offering publishers a new way to fight piracy by identifying people who are copying and sharing games, the new outlet also promises an opportunity for them to keep games fresh with constant updates and offers of trinkets, weapons and other items.

"It will be more like a living, breathing world," said Schuman.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

## Vista Emphasizes Safety, Performance

Windows Vista is assuming its final form. According to Microsoft, the latest beta, Build 5270, is nearly feature-complete, although some of Vista's interface (code-named Aero) isn't yet in place.

We took the beta for a spin and found that its focus on security and performance looks promising - yet still in need of much more polish.

We expected Vista's firewall to address a major shortcoming in XP's built-in protection by alerting you to outgoing as well as incoming traffic. But the new firewall monitors only incoming connections by default. Microsoft contends that this is sufficient for most users. We continue to recommend that you replace it with a bidirectional product, such as Zone Labs' ZoneAlarm.

Vista's BitLocker feature adds security to notebooks and other PCs by letting you encrypt the entire hard drive. If your computer (or just the hard drive) is stolen, the thief can't access your data without your 48-digit encryption key. If your computer carries the not-for-profit Trusted Computing Group's Trusted Platform Module chip, the key is retrieved automatically when you log in to Windows. Otherwise you can put the key on a USB drive, which you then use to unlock your hard drive every time you boot, or enter the key manually whenever you start your machine.

Use a thumb drive, external hard drive, or other USB storage to improve performance via Vista's Superfetch.It's too early to judge Microsoft's assertion that Vista will start more rapidly than other versions of Windows, but the new Superfetch feature might speed your work. Superfetch remembers the programs you use most often and keeps some of their components in memory for faster relaunching. Whenever you attach a drive to your USB port - be it a big external hard drive or a little flash thumb drive - Vista asks whether you want to use some of the drive's capacity to improve performance via Superfetch. If you agree, the OS shuffles files from your hard drive over to the USB-connected drive, potentially making access to those files much faster. We didn't notice any speed difference in our tests, but it's still beta time.

Windows XP has difficulty going into and waking from hibernate mode or sleep mode on some computers, and your system hardware may override your power-saving choice. In Vista, however, you simply click the new Power Off button for the best of both worlds: Your data is saved to disk in case of a loss of power (as in hibernate mode), but it also stays in memory for a short time (as in standby mode), so it revives faster.

The Vista version of Windows Media Player provides a more graphical view of your library, including album art in library listings.The Vista version of Windows Media Player replaces the previous release's boring text lists of song titles with album graphics, and the new WMP 11 main menu makes finding tunes and accomplishing other tasks easy. The program's search box appears center stage, just where you want it; and it works better, as well, with partial-match results appearing as you type.

If you own Windows XP Media Center Edition, it almost certainly came bundled with a fancy new media PC (or via a media-extender device). In the future MCE will be part of Vista and may also be sold in a stand-alone version, making it easier to assemble your own media-oriented PC. MCE is undergoing tumultuous changes with each Vista release. Chances are the MCE in this build will change significantly by the time Vista appears on shelves late this year.

If Vista can live up to its promises, ship relatively bug-free, and smooth out this beta version's many rough edges, the OS may prove a worthy successor to Windows XP. Of course, that's a lot of ifs.

## Internet Explorer 7 Now Available for Public Download

The beta version of Microsoft's Internet Explorer 7 is available to the general public starting today.

Microsoft hasn't changed much in this version of the browser since PC Worldcompared the first IE 7 beta to Mozilla's Firefox 1.5 Release Candidate 1 and Opera 9 Preview 1. But version 7 is a different beast entirely than the IE you are probably using today.

This new iteration of the world's dominant browser adds a number of features long since taken for granted by alternative-browser users, such as tabbed browsing, a toolbar-integrated search box, and limited RSS support. Version 7 also has a much more compact and streamlined interface than its predecessor, with a strong emphasis on dedicating as much of the window as possible to the displayed Web site. Also included are a number of security upgrades, like a new antiphishing filter.

To download IE 7, go here, but note that this beta of the browser is compatible only with Windows XP Service Pack 2. And keep in mind that, like any still-in-development version, this beta 2 release has bugs and rough edges. Some pages don't display properly, for instance, and the browser will crash more than you'd like.

You'll notice IE 7's interface changes right away. A mere two slim toolbars reside up top, with navigation buttons like Back, Forward, Refresh, and Home split up to make the best use of space.

Preview your open browser tabs with the Quick Tabs feature in the new, streamlined Internet Explorer 7.Tabs, also new to version 7, show up on the second toolbar. You can't move the tabs around, but you'll find a nice new feature called Quick Tabs. Click a gridlike icon next to the tabs, and you'll see a thumbnail-page display of all your currently open tabs. Firefox can mimic this feature with an add-on, but neither it nor Opera has it built in.

New security features in IE 7 include an antiphishing filter that warns you if you happen across a known phishing site, better ActiveX management that disables potentially vulnerable controls by default, and programming changes that try to reduce the number of avenues for attack.

The browser also has a thorough flush feature that clears the browser history, cache, cookies, and other personal browsing data with one selection from the Tools menu.

IE 7 lets you easily find and bookmark an RSS feed on any given Web page. But once you're subscribed, you have no way to get a quick preview of that feed's headlines - as you can with Firefox's Live Bookmarks - so you lose a significant part of RSS's usefulness.

It remains to be seen how the new IE will stack up against its increasingly popular competitors. But its release presents no downside: IE finally gets an upgrade, and the newly revived browser wars spur competition that hopefully will make all our browsers better.

## Deal Places Limits on '.com' Price Hikes

VeriSign Inc. must meet certain conditions in order to fully raise fees for ".com" domain names under a new tentative settlement reached with the Internet's main oversight agency.

The new deal also would prevent VeriSign from ultimately passing on to domain name holders separate surcharges that help fund the agency, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, or ICANN.

The revised accord would end a longstanding legal dispute between the two powerhouses behind the computer servers that, as the Internet's core address books, help people find Web sites and send e-mail.

The new deal follows months of public input and, ICANN general counsel John Jeffrey said Monday, requires final approval by the boards of both ICANN and VeriSign after another public-comment period.

In a statement, VeriSign called it "the best efforts of both VeriSign and ICANN to resolve differences that have been present for several years."

If approved, both sides would drop lawsuits filed against each other over, among other things, the introduction by VeriSign of a controversial search service called Site Finder.

The most direct change for Internet users involves domain name fees.

Currently, VeriSign charges domain name resellers, called registrars, $6 per ".com" name; registrars can then charge domain name buyers whatever they like, incorporating that $6 annual fee into the basic price. If the deal is approved, VeriSign would be allowed to raise that fee, which registrars could then pass along to customers.

The new settlement would limit those increases.

In any two of the next six years, VeriSign could raise fees by up to 7 percent a year only in response to a security threat or to comply with an ICANN mandate.

But that leaves four years in which Verisign could raise rates by 7 percent annually without having to justify the increases, objects Network Solutions Inc., a registrar that VeriSign sold in 2003.

With more than 40 million ".com" names in use, a 7 percent increase could generate as much as $17 million for VeriSign in the first year alone.

The old deal, reached in October, would have allowed VeriSign to raise the fees every year without conditions.

Network Solutions and other critics also complained that VeriSign still would get first rights to a renewal in 2012, thwarting any hopes competitors had for open bidding.

But Network Solutions did applaud ICANN for prohibiting VeriSign from passing along a separate surcharge for ".com" names.

Under the old settlement, VeriSign would have collected for ICANN up to 50 cents per ".com" name.

Now the company must pay ICANN a lump sum on its own - $6 million in the first year, increasing to $12 million in 2009.

The new settlement also makes clear that ICANN isn't immediately approving Site Finder, which VeriSign introduced in late 2003 to help Internet users find Web sites when they mistype addresses.

Following complaints that Site Finder broke some Internet tools like spam filters and gave VeriSign an unfair competitive advantage in search, the company suspended the service.

Verisign subsequently sued ICANN, complaining that the agency was making it difficult for the company to create new businesses. ICANN countersued.

With the settlement, changed little in the revision, ICANN would create procedures and deadlines to more quickly review any new services VeriSign might introduce.

The new deal also adds performance benchmarks and privacy protections.

VeriSign still faces two lawsuits over the proposed settlement, and the plaintiff in one of them, calling itself the Coalition for ICANN Transparency, said the new terms were inadequate. ICANN also is a defendant in the CFIT lawsuit.

"It's pretty clear that VeriSign and ICANN are aware of the areas that are most objected to by the Internet community, but I do think that the revision posted offers change in name only," said John Berard, a spokesman for the group.

## Researchers Warn of File-Destroying Worm

If you have computer files you'd rather not lose, now is a good time to make sure your anti-virus software is up to date. A worm set to activate Friday will corrupt documents using the most common file types, including ".doc," ".pdf," and ".zip."

Hundreds of thousands of machines are believed to be infected, mostly in India, Peru, Turkey and Italy, said Mikko Hypponen, chief research officer for Finnish security company F-Secure Corp.

The worm, known as "CME-24," "BlackWorm," "Mywife.E" or a number of other monikers, even tries to disable anti-virus software that is out of date, he said.

Thus, users should make sure their software is turned on and has the latest definitions, generally available for free from the software vendor's Web site. F-Secure also has created a free removal tool.

"If you are infected, and you find out about it today, you still have time to get rid of the virus," Hypponen said.

As worms go, the spread of BlackWorm is relatively low. But worms these days are generally designed to help spammers and hackers carry out attacks, not to destroy files as this one does. So the impact this time may be more severe.

Microsoft Corp. issued an advisory Tuesday warning customers about the worm, which affects most versions of its Windows operating system.

Users should be safe if they have the latest anti-virus software or if their computers are set with limited privileges, a common setting in larger organizations. They are vulnerable if they, like many small business and home users, leave their computers set with full administrative rights.

And users should check the date on the computer. The worm hits the third of every month, so if the computer's local calendar settings are off, Hypponen said, files may be destroyed sooner or later, even if the computer is never turned on Friday.

## Researchers Fear Confusion on Worm Name

Friday's file-destroying worm goes by "Mywife" at Microsoft Corp. and McAfee Inc., "Blackmal" at Symantec Corp. and CA Inc. and "Kama Sutra" in most media reports.

At F-Secure Corp., it's version "E" of "Nyxem," while Sophos PLC says it's version "D." Others variably refer to it as "Kapser," "KillAV," "Grew" or "Blackworm."

The official name? "CME-24."

The moniker may seem much ado about nothing, but security researchers worry that the variance could confuse consumers.

Customers of one vendor's product, for instance, may believe they are protected against "Nyxem.D" when in fact that vendor uses "E."

Or they may hear about "Kama Sutra" but don't realize their product already protects them from "Kapser," prompting phone inquiries that overload support desks.

The confusion partly results from the speed with which worms spread.

"Anti-virus companies when they get a sample need to act on that quickly," said Ken Dunham, director of the rapid response team for VeriSign Inc.'s iDefense. "They don't have time in their competitive environment to be able to go out and coordinate and have a nice little talk" about naming.

Security researchers face many decisions coming up with that initial name. Often, a new outbreak is a variation of an existing worm, so the vendor will use the next letter in the series.

But sometimes the variation is so small that not every vendor calls it a separate version, said Mikko Hypponen, chief research officer for F-Secure. Or the variation may be a bit larger, prompting some vendors to use a new name, while others use the next letter, he said.

That's why some vendors began referring to Kama Sutra as "Grew.A"; it destroys files rather than try to overload Web sites with fake traffic, as previous versions did.

But they share code and techniques with predecessors, so F-Secure went with "Nyxem.E," rearranged from the acronym for the New York Mercentile Exchange, whose Web site was targeted by the initial variant.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is attempting to unify naming through the Common Malware Enumeration, or CME. The larger outbreaks are assigned a random number - in this case "24" - to bring the various names under a single umbrella. A Web site making that information public launched in October.

But "CME-24" doesn't quite have the same ring as "Kama Sutra," so named after the Hindu love manual because of the pornographic come-ons in e-mails spreading it. Media outlets began adopting Kama Sutra, even though no major security company calls it that.

"It's primarily a media term," Dunham said. "It's something people are going to read about."

## eBay's PayPal To Collect Fee On Deposits

eBay Inc., the online auction house, will start collecting a fee to manage money deposited in its PayPal Money Market Fund, the company said.

PayPal, an electronic payment service with some 87 million customers in more than 40 countries, sweeps funds that customers keep in their accounts into the money market fund.

The company currently pays a 7-day average yield of 4.38 percent on money in those accounts. That is the highest rate of any money-market fund in the United States, according to Peter Crane, managing editor of IBC's Money Fund Report.

The move will have no material impact on the financial results of PayPal's parent, eBay, a PayPal spokeswoman said.

Starting March 1, PayPal will cut the fund's yield by one-quarter of a percentage point to help cover the costs of managing the money, the company said in letters sent to customers via e-mail on Monday. A copy was obtained

by Reuters on Tuesday.

The change will make rival mutual funds more competitive with PayPal. The Fidelity Money Market Fund, for example, has a seven-day yield of 4.12 percent, according to the investment firm’s Web site.

"PayPal’s number one ranking might be in jeopardy," Crane said.

PayPal declined to say how much money is in the fund, but Crane estimates that it has roughly $500 million. That is more than double the $221 million it had as of December 31, 2004, according to a fund prospectus.

"As the fund has grown, PayPal has continued to pay the costs of administering the fund without any reimbursement," the company said in its e-mail. "The fund will start to reimburse PayPal for a portion of its expenses - which include legal, technical, compliance and advisory services and related charges that are customary for mutual funds."

The yield cut will not completely offset PayPal’s costs for running the fund, PayPal spokeswoman Amanda Pires told Reuters. She said she couldn’t elaborate on the details of the expense structure.

Earlier this month eBay announced changes in the fees it charges to sell items on the eBay.com Web site. It raised transaction fees on goods sold for between $25 and $975. At the same time, it cut fees on lower-priced items and some optional features available to eBay merchants.

The changes in auction pricing are likely to add to earnings, eBay Chief Financial Officer Rajiv Dutta said when they were unveiled on January 18.

But PayPal spokeswoman Pires said on Tuesday that the mutual fund’s yield cut will not have a material impact on eBay’s financial results.

The PayPal Mutual Fund was launched in November 1999, the same year that the online payment processing service went live. eBay bought the company in October 2002 for about $1.5 billion.

PayPal Asset Management invests all its assets into another fund that is run by Barclays Global Fund Advisors.

## MySpace.com Subject of Sex Assault Probe

Police are investigating whether as many as seven teenage girls have been sexually assaulted by men they met through the popular Web site MySpace.com.

The girls, ages 12 to 16, are from Middletown and say they were fondled or had consensual sex with men who turned out to be older than they claimed. None of the incidents appeared to be violent, said Middletown Police Sgt. Bill McKenna.

He said it was difficult to determine the exact number of victims because some girls have been reluctant to disclose that they met their assailants online.

The social networking Web site allows users to create profiles that can include photos, personal information and even cell phone numbers.

In a statement Thursday, MySpace.com said it was committed to providing a safe environment for its users. The site, which includes safety tips, also prohibits use by anyone younger than 14, though a disclaimer says the people who run the site can’t always tell if users are lying about their ages.

## Tiffany Sues eBay for Selling Fakes

Tiffany & Company, the famous New York-based jewelry retailer, is suing San Jose, California-based online auction firm eBay for allowing its Web site to be used to sell counterfeit jewelry.

The landmark lawsuit also alleges that eBay, in addition to facilitating sales of fake Tiffany goods, also makes millions of dollars from fees charged for counterfeit sales.

Two years ago, Tiffany bought several hundred items on eBay and found that three quarters of the items purchased were counterfeit.

The Tiffany lawsuit, which originally was filed in 2004 in a New York State court, is expected to go to trial by the end of this year, according to press reports.

If Tiffany wins its case, eBay’s business model could suffer a severe blow, as this would open the door for other brand owners to sue it over counterfeit sales.

But eBay claims it is only a marketplace that brings together buyers and sellers, and cannot be held responsible for sales of counterfeit items.

"We are disappointed that Tiffany filed the suit, given that we have cooperated with their brand-protection efforts for several years through our Verified Rights Owner (VeRO) program," said Hani Durzy, an eBay spokesperson. "Through VeRO, we have worked with Tiffany to develop substantial proactive monitoring efforts and given them the tools to report problem listings, which we promptly remove."

Durzy said that eBay will continue to cooperate with Tiffany along these lines but will fight the legal action because "its claims are without merit."

"If the court finds in Tiffany’s favor, this would set a precedent and would place additional pressure on eBay to ascertain the provenance of goods sold," said Stacey Quandt, research firm Aberdeen Group’s director of security solutions and services.

"Determining whether this would be a death blow depends on the damages and the number of fraudulent goods sold on eBay," said Quandt. "The outcome could also spark both legitimate and fraudulent insurance offerings to protect consumers."

Martin Reynolds, an analyst with research firm Gartner, said he suspects Tiffany has a hidden agenda in wanting to sue eBay. "Tiffany would really like to restrict secondary sales of its products, as this would then force people to buy exclusively from Tiffany," he said. "The net effect would be to increase Tiffany’s sales."

It is not cost-effective for Tiffany to go after all the second-hand antique stores that sell genuine and counterfeit Tiffany products, Reynolds said. "But if this lawsuit scares eBay into taking all Tiffany products off its Web site, then Tiffany will have managed to strike a major blow against second-hand sale of Tiffany items."

Reynolds said that eBay has a policy of immediately taking action when it determines that counterfeit products are being sold on its Web site.

"EBay has a team of people and also computer systems, which trawl its site in search of counterfeit items," he said. "But it is not possible to catch everything. If someone displays a photograph of some Tiffany jewelry, how can eBay tell whether it is genuine?"

If Tiffany is going to sue eBay for profiting from counterfeit sales, then it should also go after the credit-card companies whose cards are used to pay for purchases of counterfeit items, Reynolds said.

"You could even argue that it should also sue the U.S. government, because people use U.S. banknotes to buy fraudulent items," he said.

"It becomes a slippery slope when a marketplace like eBay is held responsible for the products sold on the site," said Forrester analyst Sucharita Mulpuru. "It’s like the Pasadena flea market at the Rose Bowl being held liable for every fake product or tchotchke sold through its venue."

The responsibility of policing items really rests with the buyer when products are being resold, said Mulpuru, whether it’s a swap meet or an online auction.

"That said, I see Tiffany’s point of view," said Mulpuru. "It diminishes their brand when fake products are sold under their name, especially when those products are positioned as genuine."

Mulpuru believes it will be impossible for Tiffany to succeed in getting every fake item removed from eBay. "I would be really surprised if eBay is ultimately held liable for misrepresented items on its site," Mulpuru said, suggesting that the lawsuit’s main purpose might simply be to send a signal to illegal resellers that someone’s watching.

## Internet Companies Accused of Bowing to China

Lawmakers on Wednesday accused U.S.-based Internet companies of giving in to pressure from China and helping to censor Web users in violation of American principles of free speech.

They also criticized the four companies - Microsoft Corp., Yahoo! Inc., Cisco Systems Inc. and Google Inc. - for failing to attend a congressional briefing that was staged to bring to light how Internet companies do business in China.

Microsoft and Yahoo! issued a joint statement made available saying that, by themselves, they lack the leverage to influence world governments. The statement suggested the four companies could work together with governments to better protect the interests of all Internet services.

Rep. Tom Lantos, D-Calif., co-chairman of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, said, "There has been a string of disturbing incidents in which U.S.-based Internet companies have bowed to pressure from Beijing."

He said that instead of using their considerable resources to develop new technologies to bypass government gatekeepers, the Internet companies have agreed to guard the gates themselves.

Google provoked criticism last week by launching a new search engine in China that will censor some results to comply with the country's free-speech restrictions.

Reporters Without Borders, an advocacy group, said it had proved that Yahoo! helped the Chinese police identify and convict Shi Tao, a journalist who criticized human rights abuses in China.

Lantos, top Democrat on the House International Relations Committee, said: "These massively successful high-tech companies, which couldn't bring themselves to send representatives to this meeting today, should be ashamed. They caved in to Beijing for the sake of profits."

Rep. Tim Ryan, D-Ohio, said American companies will continue to expand in the Chinese market, "but they should not let profits take precedence over traditional democratic values such as freedom of speech."

Although Beijing has supported Internet use for education and business, it fiercely polices content. Filters block objectionable foreign Web sites, and regulations ban what the Chinese consider subversive and pornographic content and require service providers to enforce censorship.

Foreign companies have adopted Chinese standards, saying they must obey local laws.

In their statement, Microsoft and Yahoo! said they wanted to assure lawmakers and the public "that we do not consider the Internet situation in China to be one of 'business as usual.'"

Carolyn Bartholomew, acting chairwoman of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review, a congressionally mandated monitoring group, said China has begun to assume the role of technological leader among the developing nations in its region.

"China serves as the regional Internet provider for surrounding oppressive regimes, including North Korea and Uzbekistan," she said. "Through this role as Internet gatekeeper China exports its filtering technologies to other governments that may choose to employ them."

While attendance at Wednesday's briefing was not mandatory, companies could be compelled with subpoenas to attend a Feb. 15 hearing on the issue, said Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., chairman of the House International Relations subcommittee on global human rights.

In an interview, the lawmaker criticized U.S. Internet companies, saying they were helping China arrest and torture activists and screen information from its citizens.

"This is not benign or neutral," Smith said of companies acceding to China's demands. "They have an obligation not to be promoting dictatorship."

## US Accuses Cyber-piracy Group of "Massive" Theft

A secretive group of cyber-pirates stole copyrighted software, games and movies in what law enforcement authorities on Wednesday termed a "massive" theft for their own pleasure, not profit.

The indictments were announced by U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald in Chicago against 19 members of the underground piracy group known as "RISCISO," led by Sean O'Toole, 26, of Perth, Australia.

Another member of the group implicated in the FBI's investigation, dubbed "Operation Jolly Roger," was Linda Waldron, 57, of Barbados. Extradition will be sought for both.

As many as 60 members of the group, many of whom work in the computer field and live across the United States, tapped into their tightly controlled computer servers loaded with stolen merchandise that would fill 23,000 compact discs and was valued at $6.5 million, prosecutors said. Initially, the stolen software was sent to servers set up overseas.

"This was not someone illegally downloading a song," Fitzgerald said in announcing the 15-count indictment charging conspiracy to commit copyright infringement and other charges. "These were copyright violations on a massive scale."

The secretive RISCISO group - an acronym for Rise in Superior Couriering, plus the common file format ISO - cracked expiration and encryption codes built into trial software available on the Internet, on computer games, and on first-run movies intended only for reviewers and screeners, prosecutors said.

An FBI agent in charge of the probe said group members apparently acted in part out of the "thrill" of breaking the codes and to use the stolen items themselves, and did not appear to have tried to profit financially from the theft. An informant helped the FBI crack the case.

All 19 face a charge of conspiracy to commit copyright infringement that carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a $250,000 fine, plus restitution, prosecutors said.

## Microsoft Amends Blog Shutdown Policies

Microsoft Corp. says it is setting new policies on shutting down Web journals after its much-publicized squelching of a well-known Chinese blogger at the request of Chinese officials.

The Redmond software company, operator of a popular blogging technology called MSN Spaces, said Tuesday that it will endeavor to make blogs available to users elsewhere even if Microsoft decides it is legally obliged to block them in a particular country.

The company also pledged to provide users with a clear notice that it has shut down a Web site when the decision to do so stemmed from a legal

mandate. Previously, it has simply said the content was unavailable.

Brad Smith, Microsoft’s top lawyer, said in an interview that the circumstances of a shutdown will dictate whether a blog’s archived content alone will continue to be available elsewhere, or whether the person can continue posting information to users outside the country that ordered the blockage.

"Some of this, I think, we just have to recognize is evolving technology and changing law," said Smith, speaking by phone from a Microsoft-sponsored government conference in Lisbon, Portugal.

MSN Spaces, which allows users to post journals, pictures and other content on the Internet, boasts 35 million users, including 3.3 million in China.

The company has maintained that it is important to be able to provide users across the globe with such tools even if local laws constrain what it can make viewable in specific countries.

"We think that blogging and similar tools are powerful vehicles for economic development and for creativity and free expression. They are tools that do good," Smith said. "We believe that it’s better to make these tools available than not, but that isn’t the end of the discussion, either."

Late last year, Microsoft shut down the site of a popular Chinese blogger at Beijing’s request. The blog, written under the pen name An Ti by Zhao Jing, touch on sensitive topics such as China’s relations with Taiwan and press freedoms in China.

Microsoft rivals, including Google Inc. and Yahoo Inc., also have grappled with - and received criticism surrounding - how they censor their offerings in foreign countries.

Google said last week that it would filter sensitive topics from Web searches in China. Yahoo came under fire last year after it provided the government with e-mail account information for a Chinese journalist who was later convicted for violating state secrecy laws.

Smith said Tuesday that Microsoft hopes to build industry and government support for more formal policies on dealing with content censorship requests from foreign governments, but he wouldn’t say whether he had spoken with competitors such as Google and Yahoo directly.

John Palfrey, executive director of Harvard Law School’s Berkman Center for Internet and Society, lauded Microsoft’s moves as an important first step.

But he expected Microsoft to face considerable government pressure if it does start disclosing government censorship and makes good on its pledge to show censored data outside the country in question.

"Where we’ll see whether the policy is meaningful or not is the first time the state comes to Microsoft ... and says, "So you’re publishing to the world the subversive political statements of somebody online. Who is it?’" he said. "Does Microsoft fold or stand pat?"

## New Exam Aims to Measure Tech ’Literacy’

When it comes to downloading music and instant messaging, today’s students are plenty tech-savvy. But that doesn’t mean they know how to make good use of the endless stream of information that computers put at their fingertips.

Educators and employers call those skills "technology literacy," and while everyone agrees it’s important to have, it also is difficult to measure.

Now a test that some high school students will begin taking this year could help.

The ICT Literacy Assessment touches on traditional skills, such as analytical reading and math, but with a technological twist. Test-takers, for instance, may be asked to query a database, compose an e-mail based on their research, or seek information on the Internet and decide how reliable it is.

The test’s initials stand for "Information and Communication Technology," and a version is already used by some colleges. On Friday, the nonprofit Educational Testing Service plans to announce details of a new version that some high school and first- and second-year college students will begin taking this spring.

ETS also designs and administers the SAT, but says this isn’t designed as an admissions test. Rather, the goal is to show schools whether their students know how to use technology effectively and responsibly.

But the exam may prove difficult to sell to schools in an era of tight budgets and concern about over-testing. And "technology literacy" skills aren’t as precisely testable as, say, geometry.

Still, Princeton, N.J.-based ETS says educators increasingly recognize the "three ’r’s" have to be mastered not just on paper but also as part of the tech-heavy 21st-century workplace. Education officials in at least two states - Texas and West Virginia - are monitoring early results to see if the test would be useful.

"Students know how do a lot of things with their iPod, but what is the educational value of accessing a lot of information?" said Anita Givens, senior director for instructional materials and educational technology at the Texas Education Agency, which is also considering whether the test could help evaluate teachers. "Having a lot of information at your fingertips is like going to the library and not reading anything."

Students will receive an individual score on a point scale of 400 to 700, and schools will get reports showing how students fare in seven core skills: defining, accessing, managing, integrating, evaluating, creating and communicating information.

The new "core" version that will be sold to high schools can be taken in a school computer lab over about 75 minutes and consists of 14 short tasks, lasting three to five minutes each, and one longer task of about 15 minutes. Students may be asked, for example, to determine what variables should go where in assembling a graph, and then use a simple program to create it. They could also be asked to research a topic on the Web and evaluate the authoritativeness of what they find.

Students "really do know how to use the technology," said Dolores Gwaltney, library media specialist at Thurston High School in Redford, Mich., one of

a handful of high school trial sites for the test over the next few weeks. "But they aren't always careful in evaluating. They go to a source and accept it."

Cassandra Barnett, library media specialist at Fayetteville High School in Arkansas, another trial site, said she can't be sure her district will eventually adopt the test. Tests like the SAT and ACT, integral to college admissions, will always get priority, she said.

But Barnett said she thinks schools increasingly recognize the importance of such skills.

"When our grandparents went to school, there was a finite amount of information," she said. Now, she said, the focus is "not so much that I have to learn everything there is to learn, but now I need to learn how to find what I need to know."

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